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Nixon Rejected CIA Pullout View

By MORTON KONDRAKE

And THOMAS B. ROSS
Miami Herald-Citizen Sun Times Wire

WASHINGTON — The Nixon Administration was advised by the Central Intelligence Agency in 1969 that the United States could immediately withdraw from Vietnam and "all of Southeast Asia would remain just as it is at least for another generation."

Government documents reveal that the CIA offered the following prediction of what would happen if President Nixon, at the start of his administration, had pulled all U.S. troops out of Vietnam and opened the way to a possible Viet Cong takeover of the Saigon government:

"We would lose Laos immediately. Sihanouk (Prince Norodom) would preserve Cambodia by a straddling effort. All of Southeast Asia would remain just as it is at least for another generation.

"THAILAND, in particular, would continue to maintain close relation with the U.S. and would seek additional support. Simultaneously, Thailand would make overtures and move toward China and the Soviet Union. It would simply take aid from both sides to preserve its independence.

"North Vietnam would consume itself in Laos and South Vietnam, only Laos would definitely follow into the Communist orbit."

In totally rejecting the so-called domino theory on which U.S. policy was based in the Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson administrations,

the CIA took a position consistent with a long line of estimates dating back to the original U.S. involvement in 1954.

FOR EXAMPLE, the documents show that on May 25, 1964, the CIA declared in a national intelligence estimate that the United States would "retain considerable leverage in Southeast Asia even if Laos and South Vietnam came under North Vietnamese control."

The CIA produced the estimate as part of its pessimistic assessment of the value of launching a bombing campaign against North Vietnam. It argued that air attacks were unlikely to break Hanoi's will and carried the danger of escalating the war into a direct confrontation with Communist China and the Soviet Union.

"Retaliatory measures which North Vietnam might take in Laos and South Vietnam," the CIA declared, "might make it increasingly difficult for U.S. to regard its objectives as attainable by limited means. Thus, difficulties of comprehension might increase on both sides as scale of action mounted."

FORMER President Lyndon B. Johnson rejected the CIA's advice and started sustained bombing in February 1965.

Similarly, President Nixon disregarded the CIA estimate in 1969 and decided upon a slow withdrawal, an expansion of the war into Cambodia and Laos and a partial revival of the bombing of North Vietnam.

Since Truman, Our Indochina Policy Has Been 'Dominos,' Papers Show

By SAUL FRIEDMAN
Herald Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — On March 27, 1950, President Harry S Truman gave his approval to "NSC 64," the first National Security Council memorandum to deal solely with Indochina.

That spring, the echoes of World War II could still be heard. The chill of the cold war had set in. Mainland China had fallen to Mao. And the Korean War would soon begin.

Against that background, according to the opening chapters of the Pentagon's study of the Vietnam war, "NSC 64" gave birth to the "domino principle" — the theory that if one country falls, others will follow.

As the history of the Vietnam conflict and the Pentagon papers available to Knight Newspapers make clear, the domino principle spawned its own set of dominos which fell successively on the administrations of Presidents Truman and Eisenhower and Kennedy and Johnson.

ADOPTED BY the Truman

the observation: "The threat of Communist aggression against Indochina is only one phase of anticipated Communist plans to seize all of Southeast Asia.

"It is important to U.S. security interests," the still secret NSC memo said, "that all practicable measures be taken to prevent further Communist expansion in Southeast Asia. Indochina is a key area of Southeast Asia and is under immediate threat.

The neighboring countries of Thailand and Burma could be expected to fall under Communist domination if Indochina were controlled by a Communist-dominated government. The balance of Southeast Asia would then be in grave hazard."

THE FRENCH had granted limited independence, in early February 1950, to Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam.

On Feb. 2, Secretary of State Dean Acheson recommended, in a memo to the President, U.S. recognition of the three new states.

Two weeks after Acheson's memo, France requested American military and economic assistance to fight the Communist-dominated Viet Minh. Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson recommended to Truman the request be approved.

The United States, in March 1950, sent to Southeast Asia the first of countless missions. And on May 1, Truman approved the first military assistance funds for Indochina — \$10 million.

The French installed as their head of government the emperor Bao Dai, a playboy who had spent the war and the Japanese occupation of his country exiled in France.

Administrative policy, NSC-64 began with

"The loss of any . . . of Southeast Asia to Communist control . . . would probably lead to . . . swift submission . . . by remaining countries . . . India and . . . the Middle East . . . (and) would endanger the stability and security of Europe."

A secret document providing the basis for the "domino principle."

RELUCTANTLY, because Bao Dai was the only non-Communist Vietnamese leader available, the United States agreed to support him.

On the emperor's return from exile, the Pentagon study shows, Acheson sent a priority cable to Edmond Bullion, head of the American legation in Saigon, asking that he deliver it personally to Bao Dai.

"The U.S. government is at present moment taking steps to increase amount of aid to French Union and Associated States (Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam) in their effort to defend the territorial integrity of IC (Indochina) and prevent the incorporation of the Associated States within the Communist-dominated bloc of slave states . . ." Acheson said.

As more millions of American dollars headed towards Vietnam (more than \$1 billion had been sent by 1952) the Truman Administration was also deep in the Korean War and under criticism that it was "soft on communism."

PARTLY AS a consequence, the Pentagon analyst writes, "the 'domino principle' in its purest form was written into the 'general considerations' section of NSC 124-2," adopted in June 1952. It said:

O "Communist domination by whatever means of an Southeast Asia would seriously endanger in the short

term, and critically endanger in the longer term, United States security interests.

O "The loss of any of the countries of Southeast Asia to Communist control as a consequence of overt or covert Chinese Communist aggression would have critical psychological, political, and economic consequences. In the absence of effective and timely counteraction, the loss of any single country would probably lead to relatively swift submission to or an alignment with communism by the remaining countries of this group . . . an alignment with Communism of the rest of Southeast Asia and India, and in the longer term, of the Middle East . . . would in all probability progressively follow. Such widespread alignment would endanger the stability and security of Europe."

The National Security Council memo went on to warn that Communist control of Southeast Asia "would seriously endanger the American position in the Far East and the Pacific and could force 'Japan's eventual accommodation to communism.'

A FEW MONTHS after the memo was adopted, Dwight D. Eisenhower came into the presidency, John Foster Dulles became his secretary of state, and in the spring of 1953, a special study commission to Indochina

continued



Dean Acheson
... dominos

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The Common Interest

By TOM WICKER

WASHINGTON—In publishing the highly classified "Pentagon Papers," wasn't The New York Times setting itself up to judge the national interest? What gave The Times either the right or the standing to make such a judgment? And anyway, isn't the national interest properly the Government's to define?

That, roughly, is the line of argument most frequently advanced by those who question The Times' decision to print these important documents.

This argument rests on two assumptions—that "national interest" is primarily a matter of "national security," and that only the most skilled, experienced and informed Government officials know anything about it. Both are false.

In the latter case, the truth is that most legitimate "secrets" are not involved, technical, specialized matters—arcane weaponry details, for instance. Instead, they are policy and procedural questions on which secrecy must be temporarily imposed to give the Government some necessary freedom of action.

It was such questions of what to do and how to do it that the Johnson Administration was secretly debating in 1964 and 1965, as the situation deteriorated in Vietnam. The partial documentary record of that debate, and its evident consequences in the years since, is proof enough that even the most skilled and experienced Government officials can sadly miscalculate the "national interest."

Nor is it necessarily true that the Government has more and better information than anyone else. Subordinates reporting to their chiefs are always under pressure to report greater achievements than exist; officials who have shaped a policy have an interest in justifying it, no matter what the actual results; and preconceived policy convictions are likely to be held despite contrary facts. Sometimes the best available information can be ignored; the Pentagon Papers show that the C.I.A. repeatedly warned against overcommitment in Vietnam, and when a long-experienced State Department official advocated withdrawal from what he saw as the hopeless situation in that country in 1963, Secretary Rusk is said to have insisted that it was a basic premise of American policy not to pull out of Vietnam until the war was won. What good is even precise information in the face of such fixed attitudes?

Moreover, governments always have their own political self-interest to consider as they weigh questions of national security. Too much time spent trying to discuss and decide in secrecy tends

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to isolate them from disinterested criticism and fresh insights. The institutional, impersonal nature of national power is likely to diminish the sense of personal responsibility; members of the National Security Council do not personally drop napalm on villages.

A brilliant editorial in the Washington Post has pointed out that even the bureaucratic language disclosed in the Pentagon Papers—the repetitive jargon of "scenario" and "option" and "orchestration" and "crescendo" and "signal" and "limited action"—was so much "in flight from and in defense against reality" that those who spoke and wrote it need never have acknowledged its meaning in an actual world of falling bombs and scorched earth and terrified children.

As for the assumption that "national interest" and "national security" are somehow synonymous, it can be justified, if at all, only in some dark hour of national crisis, when survival is at stake. At any other time, "national security" can be only one important part of a democracy's "national interest"—which might be better understood as what it really is, the "common interest."

If, for example, the ultimate check on government is the people's right to vote, the exercise of it and the outcome of elections depend heavily upon how much the people know, and how accurate their knowledge is. Therefore, the press acts as much on behalf of the people in trying to inform them about what government is doing, and why, and how well it works, as government does in trying to manage the people's affairs and protect their security.

That is why The Times had not only the right but the duty to judge whether the national interest required it to print the Pentagon Papers when they came to hand. If The Times—or any news organization in the same circumstances—had no such right, then only the Government could judge the common interest, even on the question of what the people should know about the Government.

In that case, the Government need never fear public scrutiny nor account for its actions. Honest men may conclude that The Times judged incorrectly that "national security" would have been better served by keeping the Pentagon Papers secret. But if so, the damage done by this bad judgment is minor compared to the blow that would have been struck against the "common interest" had The Times abdicated its

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The Impact:

One Way or Another— There's a Lot More To Come

WASHINGTON—Had it not been for the United States the history of South Vietnam would not have included "anything that looked like a war," declared Daniel Ellsberg at midweek. By week's end, the United States had begun trying to prove that had it not been for Mr. Ellsberg, the man reported to have leaked the "Pentagon Papers," there would not have been anything like the wholesale disclosure of the Pentagon's private history of the war in South Vietnam.

A United States magistrate in Los Angeles issued a warrant for Mr. Ellsberg's arrest under the espionage laws, stamping him as the central figure in the second phase of the Government's attempt to re-establish secrecy over its version of the history of a war that was indeed still going on. Attorneys for Mr. Ellsberg said yesterday he would surrender tomorrow in Boston.

The wonder was that the Pentagon had much left to hide. The New York Times, which began the disclosures two weeks ago, and The Washington Post were seeking a Supreme Court verdict that they had the right to print what they knew. The Boston Globe, which, like The Times and The Post, was under a court order to stop it from spilling the beans, had to deposit its share of the "Top Secret/Sensitive" documents in a bank vault. Even so, the Nixon Administration was unable to insure that mum would be the word.

The Chicago Sun-Times, the string of Knight newspapers, The Los Angeles Times and The St. Louis Post-Dispatch all picked up on the story. Congress made preparations to hold public hearings on the disclosures that were streaming into print.

President Johnson had a plan for withdrawing troops in 1968 at least 99½ per cent of those classified documents could not just like Mr. Nixon's Vietnamization program, The Globe said. The Kennedy White House had

advance information about, and may even have encouraged, the overthrow of South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem in 1963, The Sun-Times declared. Former Defense Secretary Robert McNamara was pushing a coalition government for Saigon in 1967, said the Knight account. The National Security Council disregarded in 1963 intelligence advice that the war could not be won, chimed in The Los Angeles Times.

Newsday on Long Island got a peek at Lyndon Johnson's memoirs and finally, on Friday, what the White House had feared might happen, did. The accounts began to include secrets of the Nixon Administration as well as those of its predecessors.

"The Nixon Administration was advised by the Central Intelligence Agency in 1969 that it could immediately withdraw from Vietnam and 'all of Southeast Asia would remain just as it is at least for another generation,'" wrote The Sun-Times. Suddenly the stakes were different for the Nixon Administration.

The White House had appeared slow to get excited, at the beginning, about the Pentagon papers' revelations of Vietnam planning in the Johnson and Kennedy Administrations. Mr. Nixon, after all, had a new policy of measured withdrawal, his spokesman was saying. Prevailing assumptions among the politicians were to the effect that it was the Democrats who would be embarrassed come 1972 about the history unfolding on the front pages. But it soon became evident that the story of the Pentagon papers was going to change many things in Washington and challenge many assumptions about the capital in the future.

There was the challenge, right off, to the classification system itself. It didn't take long for the House Subcommittee on Government Information, chaired by Representative William S. Moorhead of Pennsylvania, to hold hearings. And from the bowels of the Pentagon itself came the assessment of William G. Florence, only recently retired from years of reviewing the way classified information is handled:

"The disclosure of information in the war study had created a situation in which Congress would necessarily be making judgments" based on incomplete information. It seemed the report was useful in making judgments.

It was on Wednesday night, after the Senate vote, that Walter Cronkite of C.B.S. showed his network's television audience the man who now stands accused of possessing—if not leaking—an unauthorized copy of the Pentagon papers. "I think the lesson is that the people of this country can't afford to let the President run the country by himself," Daniel Ellsberg said.

To the incumbent President such talk could hardly sound helpful. Worse, Mr. Ellsberg seemed to be saying that he thought the Pentagon secrets should be spread around because, as he put it in an interview with Newsweek magazine, "I smell 1964 all over again."

Whether it was, in fact, Mr. Ellsberg who ran off 7,000 pages or so of the Pentagon papers on a Xerox machine and spread them around to the press out of a desire to end the war was

still to be proved in court—despite a Justice Department affidavit from the M.I.T. researcher's former wife implying as much. Whether the American public that the opinion polls depict as sick of the Vietnam war would regard such a deed as foul or heroic was also still undecided.

But Ronald Ziegler, Mr. Nixon's spokesman, said a day after the Senate vote that the

JAMES M. NAUGHTON